



United States Senator  
**Richard Shelby**  
REPORTS TO ALABAMA



## Protecting the Homeland

*By: Senator Richard Shelby*

On July 22, 2004, the 9/11 Commission released its report addressing the problems that led to the terrorist attacks, as well as their recommendations for change as our country moves forward. Since the release of the report, Committees in both Houses of Congress have held a number of hearings to analyze and discuss their findings and recommendations. In addition, the Administration has expressed its support for many of the Commission's findings, including the creation of a National Intelligence Director. I believe it is clear that Congress and the White House are committed to ensuring the safety and security of this nation.

Since the release of the Commission's report, the Senate has charged the Government Affairs Committee with drafting legislation to implement the changes necessary in the federal government to prevent the failures of the past from occurring in the future. On July 30<sup>th</sup> the Committee held its initial hearing to learn first hand from Chairman Thomas Kean and Vice-Chairman Lee Hamilton about the Commission's report. Since that time the Committee has held additional hearings with witnesses from across the federal government to hear their responses to the Commission's findings and to learn what, if any changes their organizations have made since September 11th.

As a member of the Government Affairs Committee, I have participated in these hearings and plan to be actively involved as Congress develops legislation to address many of the failures that led to 9/11. However, as we move forward to make the changes necessary, I believe it is equally important that we not simply react but that we take specific decisive action based on a broad range of knowledge and expertise in order to accomplish the goals set forth. I truly believe that decisions made hastily and without a full appreciation for the consequences may ultimately create more problems than they actually solve. That is why these hearings and the information that we are able to obtain from them are vital to the legislation we ultimately consider.

The 9/11 Commission has said that in order to look forward and make meaningful recommendations, it was necessary to look backward. While it is difficult for many to re-live that day or even recount the years and months that preceded it, I believe that if we truly want to define our shortcomings it is necessary.

One significant shortcoming identified by the 9/11 Commission lies within our intelligence community. That shortcoming led us to 9/11 and persists still today, despite efforts at reform and integration. While the Commission's report states that "prior to 9/11 no single agency had more responsibility – or did more – to attack al Qaeda... than the CIA" it also sights numerous instances where there was a significant communication breakdown both within the CIA and within the intelligence community as a whole, particularly when it came time for agencies to work together. I believe that the Commission has rightly suggested that massive structural reform of the intelligence community is essential if we expect to properly connect the dots.

The Commission identified no less than five different entities responsible for terrorism analysis located across the government and has clearly and appropriately articulated the need to eliminate this duplication. They suggest the establishment of a National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) to be a center for joint operational planning and joint intelligence. While I agree that the existing duplication should be eliminated in order to maximize efficiencies and minimize interagency friction, I do not believe we should reinvent the wheel in an effort to establish a central facility. I believe that our efforts should capitalize on the important assets of each agency and fully integrate their assets, their information and their personnel. Only after such an integration occurs will our government truly have the capability to appropriately analyze all of the information it receives.

Going one step further, the Commission recommends that this newly integrated NCTC be overseen by a new National Intelligence Director. The Commission argues that the current

Director of Central Intelligence is flush with responsibility and yet has little real control over much of the budget and personnel he is required to oversee. I have long advocated the establishment of a National Intelligence Director -- one who holds a cabinet seat, who has strict budgetary control and one who is ultimately responsible for the successes and failures of our intelligence.

The Commission also carefully scrutinized the issue of terrorist financing. This issue, as we all know, is central to the global war on terrorism. Their conclusion that the Central Intelligence Agency relegated minimal resources to tracking terrorist funds and demonstrated little regard for the financial component of terrorist investigations is particularly troubling, although not surprising given what was already known. Further, as Chairman of the Committee on Banking, which has jurisdiction over many money laundering and terrorist financing issues, particularly oversight of the Bank Secrecy Act and Title III of the U.S.A. Patriot Act, I will continue to investigate the manner by which terrorists use the financial system to facilitate their activities. The Banking Committee has already held a number of hearings on this matter, and will continue to do so, including hearings specific to the information attained by the 9/11 Commission. The Commission's report provides the best available analysis to date on the means by which the 9/11 hijackers funded their activities and operations while in the United States. The use of ATMs, for example, goes directly to the heart of the method by which terrorists exploit banks to fund their day-to-day operations.

I have highlighted just a few of the issues that were raised in the Commission's report. As Congress continues to examine this report and its recommendations, I remain committed to ensuring that the actions and reforms we undertake are done with thoughtful, measured progress. Taking action simply for the sake of taking action will not secure our homeland, and it certainly will not honor the memory of those who lost their lives on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.